

2014 Speech from the Throne

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests and all New Brunswickers. Welcome to the opening of the First Session of the 58th Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

New Brunswickers might be disappointed by the state of our economy, they might be discouraged by woeful unemployment statistics and they might be frustrated by the difficulties they face in building a life for themselves and their families within our province.

But New Brunswickers also have a fierce belief in what we can accomplish together. They believe that, if properly governed, our province can provide a quality of life without comparison for all our citizens.

In the months and years ahead, your government will work tirelessly to move New Brunswick forward.

A detailed plan has been put in place to do just that. In fact, it is already being acted upon. It is a plan that focuses, first and foremost, on putting more New Brunswickers to work. 9

On behalf of this Assembly, I welcome the Honourable Brian Gallant to his first Session as Premier of New Brunswick. I also welcome the newly-elected Members of the Legislative Assembly and extend best wishes to all those taking on new roles in this session. I also offer best wishes and thanks to those former members not returning to the Legislature.

I also want to take this opportunity to extend thanks and appreciation to former Premier David Alward for his years of dedicated service to his province. Mr. Alward has served the people of Woodstock and this province faithfully for the past 15 years. For this, we express our gratitude.

Your government thanks former Lieutenant-Governor, Hon. Graydon Nicholas, for his exemplary work and dedication. His work promoting the importance of elders, lifelong learning and the diversity of our province has had a significant impact that will not be forgotten and will help shape future generations. As the first Aboriginal to be chosen as the Queen's representative in the province, his tenure is one of historic, social and cultural importance to New Brunswick.

Recognition

In October, our thoughts went out to the people of Ottawa, parliamentarians, and staff members on Parliament Hill and their families, following a brazen attack in our nation's capital. Together, as a country, we grieved the loss of yet another fine member of our Canadian Armed Services family. Our sorrow, however, was tempered by gratitude and pride as the full extent of the heroic actions of the House of Commons' security services became known. In particular, Sergeant-at-arms Kevin Vickers, originally of Miramichi, merits our praise and admiration for his quick-thinking and extraordinarily brave leadership. Additional violence was likely averted due to his timely intervention.

I am also pleased to take the opportunity to recognize the following New Brunswickers who made important contributions to moving our province forward over the last year.

Communities in New Brunswick, Quebec and Maine have worked together since 2008 to prepare for the Congrès mondial acadien. Thanks to the efforts of many volunteers, the pride, dynamism and vigor of the Acadian culture was celebrated and shared with thousands of visitors again in 2014.

On this, the United Nations International Day for Persons with Disabilities, we recognize the work being done each day throughout our province to remove barriers, improve inclusion and increase participation for New Brunswickers living with disabilities. Your government is proud to work in collaboration with the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons and other dedicated stakeholders to achieve these goals.

Roger Augustine, Wayne Curtis, Lorraine Diotte, Roxanne Fairweather, Ivan Hicks, Himanshu Kumar Mukherjee, Guy A. Richard, Cheryl Robertson, Claude Snow and Roch Voisine were named as members to the Order of New Brunswick.

On the national stage, Rina Arseneault of Fredericton, Salem Masry of Fredericton, Lucinda Flemer of Saint Andrews, James D. Irving of Saint John, Fawn Wilson White of Saint John, Allison McCain of Florenceville, Dennis Cochrane of Moncton and Aurel Schofield of Dieppe were invested into the Order of Canada this year.

A number of soldiers from New Brunswick received decorations for valour and meritorious service from His Excellency, the Governor General over the past year.

Warrant Officer Joseph Claude Camille Pelletier of Edmundston received the Meritorious Service Cross; and Brigadier-General Todd Nelson Balfe of Miramichi, Chief Petty Officer 1st Class Robert Lee Brown of Sackville and Captain (N) Ronald Gerald Pumphrey of Bath received the Meritorious Service Medal.

As well, Master Warrant Officer Rock Boucher, Master Warrant Officer Keith Dobbin, Chief Warrant Officer André Moreau and Warrant Officer Jody Tower all based in Oromocto were named members of the Order of Military Merit. Major Robert MacKay based in Oromocto was named officer of the Order of Military Merit.

Fredericton Police Chief Leanne Jane Fitch was named a member of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces in recognition of her career of exceptional service.

Members of the RCMP Codiac Regional Detachment, the first responders and citizens of Moncton were presented with the Governor General's Commendation for Outstanding Service. This commendation was in recognition of their professionalism, collaboration and solidarity during the tragic events of June 4, 2014, when three RCMP constables were killed and two others wounded in the line of duty.

The entire City of Moncton and surrounding areas were also honoured by His Excellency with the Governor General's Caring Community Commendation—a special honour in light of the tragedy in June.

Gisèle Michaud of Edmundston was named the Silver Cross Mother for 2014-2015 by the Royal Canadian Legion. Her son, Master Corporal Charles-Philippe Michaud, was injured in the explosion of a roadside bomb during a foot patrol near Kandahar in 2009 and later succumbed to his injuries. On behalf of all Canadian mothers who have lost children in the service of their country, she placed a wreath during the Remembrance Day ceremony at the National War Memorial in Ottawa.

Chantal Thanh Laplante of Moncton received the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case for her community engagement and activism in the Canadian women's movement.

Jennifer Brown of Saint John, Barbara Phillips of Grand Bay-Westfield, Ronald Evans of Fredericton, Robert Thibault of Moncton, Anne Martin of Saint-Jacques and Normand Thériault of Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska were recognized with the Governor General's Caring Canadian award.

The Office of the Lieutenant-Governor is pleased to recognize excellence in a variety of fields and pay tribute to those in our province who strive to do their best, not for recognition or reward, but because it is the right thing to do.

Stantec Architecture received the Lieutenant-Governor's Award for Excellence in Architecture.

Leanne Delaney and Michel Deschênes received the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra Award.

Manley Price received the Lieutenant-Governor's Award for Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation.

Corinne Gallant received the New Brunswick Human Rights Award.

Father Stan Paulin received the Lieutenant-Governor's Dialogue Award.

Byron James received the Award for Excellence in Public Administration.

Arthur Ward and his late wife Audrey received the Lieutenant-Governor's Award for Excellence in Aging.

Dr. Philip Smith received the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation Award.

Igor Dobrovolskiy, Anne Compton and Anna Torma received the Lieutenant-Governor's Award for High Achievement in the Arts.

On the music scene, City Natives, Thom Swift, Suzie LeBlanc, Les Hay Babies, Becca deHaan, Forward Music Group, Jeff Boudreau and Alan Jeffries were recognized with 2014 East Coast Music Awards.

Christine Melanson of Moncton was awarded the Prix Volet Jeunesse Richelieu for her play *L'Accessible et le Véritable*.

Dominyka Taylor of Fredericton was awarded the Governor General's History Award. Cecile Proctor of Saint John received the Volunteer of the Year Award from Brain Injury Canada.

As well, Gary Lawson received the Canadian Red Cross 2014 Humanitarian Award for New Brunswick and Tara Brinston received the Red Cross Young Humanitarian Award.

Business leaders Dwight Fraser, Roxanne Fairweather and Robert Irving were named to the New Brunswick Business Hall of Fame this year. The Codiac RCMP, West Riverview School's Playground Pals, Rick Baker, Jay Jonah, Lesley Smyth, Sorcha Beirne and posthumously, Andy Scott, received YMCA Peace Medallions and Emma Dauphinee received the YMCA Youth Peace Certificate.

For a small province, New Brunswick has a long and remarkable history of achievement in sport. The following New Brunswickers' achievements have continued to contribute to this legacy.

Louis Fortin competed in cross-country skiing during the 2014 Sochi Winter Paralympics and Emily Baadsvik was an alternate for the women's bobsled team at the Winter Olympics. Nine other New Brunswickers were at the Olympics in various capacities, such as coaching, officiating and acting as mission staff.

New Brunswick athletes participated in the 2014 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games in June. All told, 43 athletes won 36 medals in various categories.

Athletes from communities across the province participated last July in the 2014 North American Indigenous Games. Team N.B., featuring a roster of 66 athletes, won 26 medals.

Sussex-born Christian Meier, a racing cyclist who participated in the 2014 Tour de France, is one of only a handful of Canadians to participate in this race. Catharine Pendrel of Harvey Station won a gold medal in women's mountain biking at the Commonwealth Games.

Olivia DeMerchant won a silver medal in August at the Women's Rugby World Cup in France, and Christel Robichaud brought home a silver medal in the discus at the World Junior International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports.

Most recently, Robert Kierstead won the 2014 Geoff Gowan Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his lifetime contributions to coaching development.

Condolences

Over the past year we have lost heroes, community builders and business leaders who have left legacies that continue to impact our province and our way of life.

We pause to remember RCMP Constables Fabrice Georges Gevaudan, David Joseph Ross and Douglas James Larche who tragically lost their lives protecting their community and country.

We also pay tribute to Corporal Nathan Cirillo and Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent who also died in the line of duty. We remember paramedic William Mallock and pilot Klaus Sonnenberg.

We celebrate the life of David Kelly, Fredericton city councillor, chair of the Canadian Tire Jump Start program and vice-chair of Jobs Unlimited Fredericton.

We remember Reuben Cohen and Purdy Crawford, businessmen, lawyers and philanthropists. We also pay tribute to artists Fred Ross and Molly Lamb Bobak.

We celebrate the life of Peter Wolters, Director of Finance and Human Resources for the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick.

We also remember Dorothy Lockhart, our first Senior Goodwill Ambassador, naturalist Mary Majka, and Flora Thibodeau, who, at age 112, had been the oldest-living Canadian.

We celebrate the life of Edmond Blanchard, former MLA, Cabinet Minister and judge. We also remember Jim Flaherty, former Federal Finance Minister, whose mother was born in Campbellton and whose father hailed from Loggieville.

A Focus on Jobs

Your government has a plan to move New Brunswick forward—a plan to create the right conditions for job growth, a plan to achieve fiscal balance and a plan that will put our families and communities back to work.

Your government's top priority is creating jobs, because more jobs is a necessary first step toward achieving our other goals—namely, to help get our finances in order and to generate the revenue we need to improve the lives of all New Brunswickers.

But raising revenue through new jobs isn't enough. We must also gain control of our expenses. Your government has a clear plan to do just that.

New Brunswick has been locked in a cycle of job losses, deficits and population decline in recent years. We need a new cycle, one filled with hope and promise—a cycle that begins with job creation and culminates in improved finances and better services for New Brunswickers.

The enormous potential of our province will be realized once we turn the page on old approaches that have not worked.

Your government has hit the ground running, guided by a focused job creation plan that is responsible, achievable and balanced.

Creating New Brunswick Jobs

If we are going to create more jobs, we need to change our traditional approach to economic development. For too long, our province has allowed politics and parochial interests to dictate our job creation efforts. Instead, we need to be guided by evidence and expertise.

We need to better understand the long-term implications of the decisions your government makes on behalf of New Brunswickers. Plans should be designed for the next generation, not the next election. A strategic and coordinated approach to investments and job creation can achieve this.

Our province needs to diversify its economy. We need to protect and strengthen our traditional sectors, but we also need to develop emerging ones. This will make our economy more resilient in hard times, better able to seize opportunities in good times and stronger overall.

This work will begin with the development of a new framework for job creation and economic development in New Brunswick.

The New Brunswick Jobs Board, chaired by the premier, will be accountable for all job creation work undertaken by the province. This new body will be responsible for establishing the right conditions for job growth in New Brunswick. It will also be charged with improving the coordination of the government's province-wide efforts in job creation, and with evaluating its successes and failures on this front.

With the New Brunswick Jobs Board providing the oversight in job creation, Opportunities New Brunswick will be busy on the ground, pursuing opportunities and supporting business growth in our province. This new arm's-length Crown Corporation will distinguish itself from its predecessors by adopting a client-focused approach, by actively seeking to eliminate silos, and by being nimble, accountable and data-driven.

Your government's efforts to create jobs must not stop here. Each and every government department will be recruited to the task. A new economic filter will help guide government decisions across departments. No longer will policies be enacted without first asking: what impact will this decision have on jobs in New Brunswick?

To create jobs in the long-term, we need to invest in the people of New Brunswick. That means addressing the skills gap. At the moment, there are too many people in New Brunswick without jobs. But the opposite is also true. There are too many jobs without people who possess the skills to fill them. We need to provide better skills training for the jobs we have today, but more importantly, we need to train people for the jobs that will come tomorrow.

With the right policies, your government is convinced that New Brunswick youth can stay in the province to find good work. Too many have had to leave our province to find opportunity.

It is for this reason that your government has created a new Youth Employment Fund. Starting in 2015, job placements under this fund will help 1,500 young New Brunswickers obtain valuable work experience and training every single year. It will also help businesses who are looking for young, skilled workers.

Early-learning and education are the foundation for strengthening New Brunswick's place in the world. By leveraging the vast potential of our learners and better supporting our educators and teachers, New Brunswick can move forward as an innovative, open and engaged province.

Your government will begin work on a new 10-year plan for education, one that builds on the tremendous success of recent exercises such as the development of the Linguistic and Cultural Development Policy in the francophone sector. The new 10-year education plan will encompass the early years as much as it does the later ones, creating an essential link in our system between schools, colleges, universities, and other training programs. The plan will be developed in an open and collaborative manner, with stakeholders and experts in early-childhood and education working together to develop a road map that will guide progress over the next 10 years.

Critical skills for the success of our students—from literacy in languages to literacy in the so-called STEM disciplines—continue to serve as the cornerstones for the public education system. Your government will ensure that students have access to the skills required to be successful in the knowledge economy. By focussing on innovation and technology, through initiatives such as the introduction of coding as an essential skill, New Brunswick can leverage its knowledge resources.

These measures are all part of your government's plan to create the most job-ready generation in New Brunswick history.

As part of its innovation agenda, your government will work to accelerate the growth of innovation-based entrepreneurship and create the conditions for the commercialization of current and future research in the province's universities and research centres.

Two of the largest venture capital deals in ICT in recent Canadian history happened here, in New Brunswick, yet our province's exports in information and communications technology remain below the national average. Your government recognizes the great opportunity that rests in the intersection between innovation and the economy. For this reason, the premier himself will lead the innovation file for the government of New Brunswick.

Your government recognizes that our energy and natural resource sectors are economic drivers for the province. In fact, New Brunswick is the most export-dependent province in Canada. In large part, this is due to our energy and natural resource sectors.

The global and North American energy landscapes are rapidly shifting. Your government is not satisfied by simply putting all our eggs in a single basket. A more diverse crop of energy and natural resource opportunities must be diligently pursued.

This is why your government supports the responsible development of our energy and natural resource opportunities.

Your government will provide ongoing support for and maximization of economic opportunities from the development of the Energy East Pipeline project.

Your government will provide ongoing support for the development of a proposed oil export terminal in Saint John.

Your government will provide ongoing support for the potential conversion of the Canaport LNG terminal in Saint John to an export facility. Your Premier has recently travelled to Alberta and Texas to explore this particular opportunity.

Finally, your government will provide ongoing support for the development of mining opportunities and projects such as the proposed Sisson tungsten mine project in central

New Brunswick, the PCS Picadilly potash expansion project in the Sussex area and a re-start of the Trevali lead-zinc mine at Caribou.

The economic impact of these projects is far reaching. The jobs that are created will allow for a greater number of New Brunswick families to live comfortably and fully participate in our economy. The revenues to government that flow from these projects will also help address our financial situation.

Your government, however, recognizes that it must do a better job of engaging First Nations in discussions about energy and natural resource development.

Your government will also ensure that we never put our health, our environment, or the sustainability of our resources at risk through the development of these opportunities. Safety and sustainability must constantly guide efforts.

Your government recognizes the importance of small- and medium-sized businesses to job creation in our province. These entrepreneurs are among the hardest working people in New Brunswick. Together we will foster the right conditions for them to succeed.

To help develop an environment where small businesses can thrive and create jobs in their communities, your government will lower the small business corporate income tax to 2.5 per cent over the next four years, the lowest rate east of Manitoba.

Your government will also work to identify and freeze the various annual fees that hamper small-business growth, as well as eliminate any burdensome red tape that might slow them down.

Two initiatives undertaken by the previous administration were destined to have a detrimental impact on small business operators in our province. The New Brunswick Drug Plan and the New Brunswick Forestry plan will be re-evaluated by your government to ensure that they are as fair and as sustainable as possible given the constraints that have been imposed.

If no action is taken, the provincial drug plan will become mandatory for uninsured New Brunswickers in April of next year. Small businesses and average New Brunswickers will suddenly face hefty premiums in exchange for coverage. Your government will explore other, more equitable ways of delivering this service.

Similarly, the new provincial forestry plan has been roundly criticized by small independent operators in New Brunswick. To ensure that decisions were made based on scientific evidence your government will collect and release the documents that guided the development of this plan. As with the New Brunswick Drug Plan, the New Brunswick Forestry plan will be re-examined to ensure that it is as sustainable and as fair as possible given the constraints that have been inherited by your government.

Your government recognizes that investments in infrastructure are a great way to boost a struggling economy, both in the short-term through immediate job creation, and in the long-term through the building of strategic resources. Your government will therefore look to invest in assets that can help grow our economy over the long-term. This could include infrastructure that facilitates new opportunities in emerging sectors, such as ICT, or that supports the expansion of our traditional industries.

There are additional reasons to invest in our infrastructure. New Brunswick's roads, bridges and other public infrastructure are in deplorable shape. The auditor general has made this clear. The safety of New Brunswickers is at stake. Furthermore, it makes good financial sense to undertake these upgrades now, instead of waiting for heftier repair bills later.

To these ends, your government will create an Infrastructure Investment Fund. In order to be approved, projects will have to meet at least one of the following criteria: Does the project create jobs, either immediately or in the long-term? Does the project make us safer? Does the project save us money in the long-term?

The first initiatives to receive financing under this special fund will be announced as part of your government's capital budget, to be presented in the weeks to come.

Your government recognizes that northern New Brunswick faces unique challenges and, as a result, has higher unemployment than the rest of the province. Your government will renew and refocus the Northern and Miramichi Economic Development Funds to provide strategic assistance to this region.

These funds will assist municipalities in upgrading infrastructure that is critical to creating jobs in their regions and assist businesses in establishing the assets they need to attract jobs and people.

To help working New Brunswickers make ends meet and to re-inject more of our collective earnings back into the New Brunswick economy, your government will increase the minimum wage to \$10.30 per hour by the end of 2014.

This 30-cent increase marks the first increase to the minimum wage in New Brunswick since April 2012.

This increase will help make life more affordable for the nearly 28,000 New Brunswickers who currently earn the minimum wage and will provide an overall boost to our economy by putting more money in the pockets of low-wage earners.

A higher minimum wage also leads to lower employee turnover and better employee performance overall.

This initial increase to the minimum wage will be followed by subsequent increases in the years ahead.

Your government plans to introduce other initiatives this year, similarly designed to boost equality and the economy at the same time.

Your government believes that our seniors deserve to retire with dignity and respect after working hard their entire lives. To help our seniors stay in their homes longer, a program will be developed that provides tax breaks on renovations costing up to \$10,000. This will also, in turn, create many jobs.

Your government will also reinstate the home energy efficiency retrofit program to reduce energy use and lower costs for consumers. The program will focus particularly on helping low-income New Brunswickers make their homes more energy efficient and will be available starting in April, 2015.

This measure has the added benefit of creating jobs in the short and medium term as New Brunswickers hire contractors to complete this work.

Some of the world's top performing economies enjoy the highest proportion of women on decision-making bodies. The underrepresentation of women in the New Brunswick Legislature, and on other governing bodies, is detrimental to the quality of services that all New Brunswickers receive.

To help make our government smarter and our economy stronger, steps will be taken to ensure that the voices of women are heard on policy-making bodies, including the appointment of more women to provincial agencies, boards and commissions.

Investing in Jobs by Getting our Fiscal House in Order

To maintain and generate the resources we need to invest in job creation, we need to tackle our fiscal problems. This will be a shared endeavour.

In the early days of its mandate, your government has sought to lead by example.

For instance, Cabinet has been shrunk to its smallest size in generations, allowing for both increased efficiency and reduced expenses. As well, the process to approve travel by all government employees has been considerably tightened, leading to further savings.

Your government is focused on governing smarter to control expenses. To this end, common functions will be centralized across government including communications, information technology, policy development, human resources and financial services.

These services—none of which are offered directly to the public—are duplicated across each department of government. This re-alignment of services will produce savings as

early as your government's first budget. It will also streamline decision-making, moving away from the inefficient approaches of the past.

Other measures will be undertaken this year to increase government revenues. These include raising income taxes paid by the richest one per cent of New Brunswickers and rescinding a tax break previously granted to large corporations.

Without question, further efficiencies must be found if we are truly to address our financial situation. Difficult choices and tough decisions lie ahead. Your government will make these decisions, but not in isolation. We will make them together. Your government is ready to listen and eager to have an open dialogue.

A comprehensive review of all government programs, services, and processes will be launched this year. Your government wants New Brunswickers to get involved in this initiative. The goal is to identify at least \$250 million in savings across government.

In the 1990s, the federal government stared down a far graver financial situation and was able to right it in short order. Their process continues to be written about nearly 20 years later as a model for the world. It is this model that your government will use to balance New Brunswick's books. It is an approach that will leave no stone unturned to ensure that our fiscal situation is stable, allowing us to make further investments in job creation and families.

The findings of this review will be implemented, at the latest, in your government's second budget.

Conclusion

Over the course of this session, ministers will provide more details regarding the initiatives contained in this Speech from the Throne.

This session will also include Capital Budget Estimates and, over the coming days, amendments to a variety of Acts of the Legislative Assembly will be introduced and debated in order to ensure your government continues to improve services offered to the public.

Your government will also provide details on additional policy and program matters of importance to the people of New Brunswick.

The plan is now in place to get New Brunswick moving forward again.

It is a plan that will create more jobs through better policy and coordination.

It is a plan that will create sustainable jobs through a diversified approach.

And, it is a plan that will create better jobs by investing in our people.

Overcoming the challenges we face will require more than changes to legislation and policy.

The work needed to move New Brunswick forward will happen beyond the walls of this Chamber.

We have a great challenge ahead of us. It is important that we face this challenge together.

May divine Providence continue to bless New Brunswick and its residents, and guide this Assembly in its deliberations.

Cover Illustration: The New Brunswick Legislative Assembly by Gertrude Duffie

Gertrude Duffie is a respected painter and illustrator whose work hangs in both public and private collections here in New Brunswick and throughout Canada. Duffie was born in Miramichi (Chatham) and received her art education at the University of Ottawa, Holland College and through the University of New Brunswick. She also studied under renowned New Brunswick painters Molly Lamb Bobak and Fred Ross.

In 1983, she was commissioned to research and prepare drawings on the history of Fredericton. These illustrations were the basis for 24 tapestries woven by the late Dr. Ivan Crowell. They are on permanent display in the Council Chamber of Fredericton City Hall.

In 1986, Duffie received the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce Distinguished Citizen Award and received an honorary degree from St. Thomas University in 2004. Over the years, she has actively given her time and talent as an artist to many charitable organizations in the Fredericton region.